

Message Text

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SUBJECT: LAY PARTIES REACT TO LA MALFA'S CHARACTERIZATION OF
HISTORIC COMPROMISE AS INEVITABLE

SUMMARY. REPUBLICAN PARTY LEADER UGO LA MALFA RECENTLY PRE-
DICTED THAT DC-PCI HISTORIC COMPROMISE IS "INELUCTABLE". HIS
STATEMENT HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF WIDE COMMENT AND SOME
MISINTERPRETATION. THE SEEMING HARSHNESS OF LA MALFA'S
JUDGMENT HAS BEEN SOFTENED IN SUBSEQUENT REINTERPRETA-
TIONS BY OTHER PRI LEADERS. NEGATIVE REACTIONS BY SOCIALISTS
AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATS TO THE REPUBLICAN LEADER'S PRONOUNCE-
MENT INDICATE THAT THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT HAS ROOM FOR
MANEUVER AND THE CHANCE TO ATTRACT THE ACTIVE SUPPORT OF ONE
OR MORE OF THE PARTIES PRESENTLY ABSTAINING. END SUMMARY.

1. REPUBLICAN PARTY (PRI) PRESIDENT UGO LA MALFA'S CASSANDRA-
LIKE STATEMENT THAT THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE BETWEEN DC
AND PCI IS "INELECTABLE" HAS PROVOKED AN ONGOING DEBATE
WITHIN THE LAY PARTIES. ALTHOUGH THE STATEMENT WAS MADE
ORIGINALLY IN AUGUST, THE POLEMICS HAVE REACHED A HIGH
POINT ONLY IN RECENT DAYS.

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2. LA MALFA'S LOGIC BEGINS WITH THE ASSERTION THAT THE

CENTER-LEFT PARTIES, ESPECIALLY THE DC, HAVE DONE A MISERABLE JOB OF GOVERNING ITALY OVER THE PAST 15 YEARS, AND IN SO DOING HAVE ALLOWED THE COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI) TO THRIVE AND GROW ON THE ILLS OF THE NATION. NOW THAT VAST ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS THREATEN NATIONAL COLLAPSE, THE DC IS STILL UNABLE TO OFFER PROGRAMMATIC SOLUTIONS. THE ONLY POSSIBLE WAY OUT OF THE CRISIS IS TO GIVE THE PCI THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DC WHICH IT HAS BEEN SEEKING. ONCE VESTED WITH GOVERNMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY, THE PCI WILL FINALLY BE FORCED TO SHOW WHETHER IT REALLY HAS THE ABILITY TO FORMULATE AND IMPLEMENT THE SORT OF MEASURES NEEDED TO RETURN ITALY TO RESPECTABILITY AS A DEMOCRATIC, INDUSTRIAL STATE. EVER THE PESSIMIST, LA MALFA STRESSES THAT THE PCI HAS SHOWN EVERY INDICATION OF BEING UNABLE IN PRACTICE TO DELIVER ON ITS PROMISES.

3. DISSENT WITH LA MALFA'S VIEW REPORTEDLY BEGINS WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY. ONE HIGH-LEVEL PRI OFFICIAL TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT THE PRI PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT WAS MEANT TO SERVE AS A PROVOCATION AND LAST WARNING TO THE DC. IF THE CURRENT ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT MAKES A SERIOUS ATTEMPT TO FORMULATE THE NECESSARY ECONOMIC AUSTERITY AND REFORM MEASURES, THE PRI WILL NOT, ACCORDING TO THIS REINTERPRETATION OF LA MALFA, MAKE ITS SUPPORT CONTINGENT UPON BRINGING THE PCI INTO THE MAJORITY.

4. SOCIALIST PARTY (PSI) SECRETARY BENNINO CRAXI, WHO FREQUENTLY HAS BEEN MAKING NOISES FRIENDLY TO THE DC, DENOUNCED LA MALFA'S ATTEMPT TO OPEN A PRIVILEGED DIALOGUE WITH THE PCI. THE PSI NEWSPAPER REPROACHED THE REPUBLICANS FOR "THROWING IN THE SPONGE" TOO SOON. FOR THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, INCLUDING THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE, IS INEVITABLE. PRETI POINTS OUT THAT THE PCI ALREADY HAS A FORMAL ROLE IN THE ITALIAN POLITICAL PROCESS, AND THAT SUCH A ROLE NEED NOT EXPAND IF THE SOCIALISTS ACCEPT A COALITION BETWEEN THE LAY PARTIES AND THE DC BASED ON SPECIFIC PROGRAMMATIC AGREEMENTS.

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5. COMMENT: REACTION TO LA MALFA'S STATEMENT SEEMS TO CONFIRM OUR VIEW THAT THE LAY PARTIES, INCLUDING THE PSI, ARE WILLING TO GIVE THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROVE ITSELF. IF THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT DOES WELL, IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE THAT A CRAXI-LED PSI MIGHT DECIDE TO SWITCH FROM AN ATTITUDE OF BENEVOLENT ABSTENSION TO ONE OF ACTIVE SUPPORT OF

THE DC. IN THAT EVENT, THE PCI'S ATTITUDE WOULD NO
LONGER BE DETERMINANT AND THE IMMINENT POSSIBILITY OF
A FORMAL HISTORIC COMPROMISE WOULD RECEDE. REPUBLICAN
AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT FOR A RENEWED DC-PSI
RELATIONSHIP WOULD DOUBTLESS BE FORTHCOMING. FROM
THIS EMERGES CLEARLY THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NEXT FEW
MONTHS, WHICH WILL TELL WHETHER THE NEW GOVERNMENT INTENDS
MERELY TO MEDIATE BETWEEN POWER GROUPS IN THE OLD
STYLE OR TO PROPOSE EFFICIENT AND PROGRAMMATIC SOLU-
TIONS.BEAUDRY

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